

SAMPLE LETTER

Dear Parent,

This year, Idaho is moving toward a new accountability system for public schools across the state that is not only a higher level of accountability but also will be easier to understand and more transparent for parents and patrons.

The new accountability system – known as Idaho’s Five-Star Rating System – will more accurately measure and recognize the academic performance in Idaho’s schools. Under the old accountability system required by the federal No Child Left Behind law, the state was only able to use one metric – proficiency (or how many students can pass a test) – to determine the academic quality of a school. Each year, the state reported whether or not each school made “Adequate Yearly Progress,” or AYP based on how many students in a school reached proficiency on the ISAT.

Now, the state is moving away from the restrictions of the federal No Child Left Behind law and implementing a new accountability system that more accurately measures the academic quality of each school and better communicates the results with parents and families. Whereas under the old system schools either met AYP or did not meet AYP based on a single measure, the new accountability system in Idaho will provide a spectrum that more accurately describes a school’s academic performance using multiple measures. Under the Five-Star Rating System, the state uses multiple measures, including academic growth, graduation rates and indicators of success in college and the workforce. To move to this new system, the state must receive a waiver from the U.S. Department of Education from certain provisions of the federal No Child Left Behind law. Idaho submitted its waiver application in February and is now finalizing negotiations with the U.S. Department of Education to begin its transition to this new system. The transition will begin this year, which means the state will be announcing AYP results as well as Five-Star Rating results near the beginning of the school year. Next year and every year going forward, the state will completely move to the Five-Star Rating System.

Therefore, this year, the school your child attends will receive a rating under Idaho’s Five-Star System. These ratings are being calculated right now and will become available publicly by the beginning of September, if not sooner. Here is a summary of the new rating system and what you can expect to see this fall:

Your child’s school will no longer be rated on whether or not it meets AYP, which only measures how many students score on grade-level on the ISAT. Instead, each school will be rated as a One-Star, Two-Star, Three-Star, Four-Star or Five-Star School based on multiple measures of academic performance, including academic growth.

Under the Five-Star System, schools with grades K-8 will be measured based on the following factors:

- Academic growth: how much progress did students make over the past school year.
- Academic proficiency: how many students have reached grade-level or higher in each subject area on the ISAT.

- Participation: Schools must demonstrate that at least 95 percent of students in the schools were tested.

Under the Five-Star System, schools with a grade 12 will be measured based on the following factors:

- Academic Growth: The state will measure how much progress students made over the past school year.
- Academic Proficiency: The state will measure how many students have reached grade-level or higher in each subject area on the ISAT.
- Postsecondary and Career Readiness Metrics: The state will measure a school's graduation rate, the number of students enrolled in and successfully completing advanced courses, and student scores on college entrance exams, such as the SAT, ACT, ACCUPLACER or COMPASS. The state currently pays for all students to take the SAT or ACCUPLACER.
- Participation: Schools must demonstrate that at least 95 percent of students in the schools were tested.

After calculating these measures, each school will receive a Star Rating.

- Four-Star and Five-Star Schools will be publicly recognized and celebrated for their excellent performance as top-performing schools across Idaho. These schools will serve as an example to other schools.
- Three-Star Schools will be recognized as doing a good job for students but will also be required to develop an improvement plan for certain areas in which the school could improve academic achievement.
- One-Star and Two-Star Schools are schools in which the state has identified areas of improvement. These schools will develop school improvement plans tied to research-based best practices, and the State Department of Education will focus intense time and resources to provide the support necessary to raise academic achievement and close achievement gaps in these schools.

Through the new Five-Star Rating System, Idaho will have a consistent, uniform system of accountability for all schools. This new system will not only bring higher levels of accountability to public education but also will more accurately measure academic performance in schools and give Idaho parents and patrons clearer, easy-to-understand information on how schools are performing academically each year.